

The Fall of Satan

When Did This Take Place?

There are three main views concerning when Satan's fall into sin took place. Let us consider each of these:

View 1—Satan's fall took place in the gap between Genesis 1:1

That Satan's fall took place in the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 is the view of those who hold to the "gap theory." This view teaches that God originally created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1), including angels and also including (as some would say) a race of pre-Adamic men (ape-men?) and animals (such as dinosaurs). They believe that in the so-called gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 there is a vast amount of time, even millions of years. During this time many things are said to have happened, such as Satan's fall into sin, the earth judged, and dinosaurs becoming extinct. This theory was devised in order to try to harmonize the facts of Genesis chapter one with evolutionary theory and their so-called geological ages.

This view understands Genesis 1:1 as describing the original creation; Genesis 1:2 as describing conditions as a result of God's judgment on the world, and Genesis 1:3 and following as describing a "re-creation" of the world.

For a refutation of the Gap Theory, see the MBC paper

entitled *The Gap Theory Examined in Light of Scripture* (25¢).

View 2—Satan's fall took place in the gap between Genesis chapter 2 and Genesis chapter 3

That Satan's fall took place in the gap between Genesis chapter two and Genesis chapter 3 is the view held by many fine creationists and Bible teachers. These people hold to a recent earth (the age of the earth in terms of thousands of years, not millions of years) and they hold to a literal six-day creation week. For this they are to be commended.

Why do they believe that Satan's fall took place after Genesis two and before Genesis three? One key reason is that they assume that the creation of Satan took place during the creation week (on the very first day of the creation week). They base their assumption on Exodus 20:11, "For in six days **the LORD made heaven** and earth, the sea, **and all that in them is**, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." They would argue that the Creator made the heaven(s) and the earth in six days and He made all that is in the heaven(s) and the earth in six days. Since the angels, including Lucifer, are part of all that is in heaven, they conclude that the creation of Lucifer took place during the six days of creation. They would also draw our attention to Colossians 1:16 where the Bible includes angels in God's work of creation: The verse says, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and **invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers**: all things were created by him, and for him."

Those believing that Satan's fall took place in the gap between Genesis chapter two and Genesis chapter three also point

to Genesis 1:31 which says, “**And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.** And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” They pose the question, “How could God pronounce His ‘VERY GOOD’ upon a universe which contained a wicked, fallen angel, whom we now know as Satan?” Their answer: “It seems far more reasonable to think of Satan’s fall as occurring sometime after God gave this pronouncement.” Thus the two major arguments of this view center around Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 1:31.

Another argument these creationists use is based on Genesis 1:26,28. These are verses in which God gives man rule and dominion over the animals. They believe that if Satan had already fallen, then God giving men authority over animals would compromise the *total* dominion of the world that God entrusted to Adam, since Adam would then have Satan as a rival working against him. This argument is weak, however, for all would agree that Satan is a fallen creature as Genesis chapter three begins. Prior to man’s fall, Adam still had dominion even though a fallen devil was present. Adam's total dominion was affected by Adam's sin, not by the presence of a fallen devil.

The key to understanding when Satan fell is to understand when he was created. If a person places the creation of Lucifer within the six-day week of creation, then he is forced to say that Satan's fall took place after Genesis chapters one and two while Adam and Eve were alive. This view is forced to conclude that the fall of Satan and the fall of Adam were events that took place at about the same time in history, and that these two events were not separated by a very long period (perhaps by only a matter of days).

View 3–The fall of Satan took place prior to Genesis chapter 1

The position that the fall of Satan took place prior to Genesis chapter one assumes that the creation of Satan (Lucifer) and his fall both took place prior to Genesis 1:1 and that his fall took place prior to the creation of Adam and Eve, not after their creation. Consider the following:

1. Genesis chapter one describes in detail the six days of creation and what was created on each day. The chapter talks about the creation of the earth, the atmosphere, the sun and moon, the stars, the dry land, the plants, and the animals. In this chapter nothing is said at all about the creation of the angels. Was this simply an omission, or is it possible that the creation of the angels did not fall within these six days?
2. Exodus 20:11 places the creation of Lucifer within the creation week only if it is assumed that the expression “heaven” (or “heavens”) refers not only to the first and second heavens, but to the third heaven as well.¹
3. A comparison between Exodus 20:11 and another verse on creation found in Nehemiah 9:6 is helpful. The Nehemiah passage definitely refers to the creation of angels. Notice the expressions that are used:

“For in six days the LORD made **heaven** (or **heavens**) and earth, the sea, and all that in them is”
(Exodus 20:11).

¹ The first heaven is the atmospheric heaven, that which can be seen during the day; the second heaven is the stellar universe or that which can be seen at night; the third heaven is the “highest” heaven which is the abode of God and the original home of angels and which can be seen only with the eyes of faith. See 2 Cor. 12:2.

“Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made **heaven** (or **heavens**), **the heaven of heavens**, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and **the host of heaven [angels] worshippeth thee**” (Neh. 9:6)

Notice the additional phrase used in the Nehemiah passage, “the heaven of heavens.” This is the Hebrew way of making a superlative. “A superlative sense is expressed by joining a noun with its own plural in the genitive” (*Hebrew Syntax* by Davidson, p. 49). The superlative is also used in English. An example is, “The Bible is the Book of Books!” By this we mean that the Bible is the greatest Book of all. Here are some Bible examples: “Slave of slaves” means the lowest slave (Gen. 9:25). “Holy of holies” means most holy (Exodus 26:33). “Song of songs” means the most excellent song. “King of kings” means the greatest of all kings (Ezekiel 26:7 and see 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16). For other examples see *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, p. 431 (Section 133i). Thus, “the heaven of heavens” means “the greatest of the heavens” or “the highest of all heavens” (see Brown, Driver and Briggs’ *Hebrew Lexicon*, p.1030). The highest of all heavens can only refer to the third heaven, which is the abode of God and angels.

The expression “heaven of heavens” is found in the following passages: Deuteronomy 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 2:6; 6:18; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 68:33 and Psalm 148:4. In each of these passages the phrase clearly refers to the third heaven, “the highest of all heavens.” Notice also that Psalm 148:1-4 is another passage (like Nehemiah 9:6) which mentions the angels (v.2) and in the same context mentions the highest of all heavens (v.4).

Exodus 20:11 does not mention the heaven of heavens and Genesis chapter one does not mention the heaven of heavens either. Neither of these passages mention angels. Could it be that Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 1 refer only to the first and second heavens and not to the third heaven? And if so, is this

an indication that the third heaven with all its host had already been created prior to the six days of creation?²

The Hebrew word “heaven” always occurs in the plural form and may be translated “heavens” if the context so demands. Thus Genesis 1:1 could be translated “God created the heavens and the earth” (referring to the first and second heavens). There are times in the Bible when “heaven” can refer to the third heaven (Matt. 6:9), the second heaven (Psalm 8:3), or the first heaven (Matt. 6:26 “fowls of the heaven”), but the expression “heaven of heavens” only refers to the third heaven.

4. The expression “the heaven(s) and the earth” (found in Genesis 1:1 and Exodus 20:11) refers to the UNIVERSE (the Hebrew language did not have a word for universe as we do). The universe is made up of the earth, the first heaven and the second heaven and includes the earth with its solar system, its galaxy and the millions of galaxies around it. The third heaven is beyond our universe and unseen by any telescope.
5. Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 1:1 both refer to the creation of the universe (the heavens and the earth) that took place in six literal 24 hour days. In both Exodus 20:11 and Genesis chapter one, no mention is made of the heaven of heavens or the creation of angels or the creation of the throne of God or the creation of anything else which relates to the third heaven. Also in

²There are 5 passages which make a distinction between the heaven and the heaven of heavens (see Deut. 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6; 6:18; Neh. 9:6). These passages may imply that the “heaven” of Genesis 1:1 may not include the heaven of heavens (the third heaven). Also Psalm 68:33 refers to the heavens of heavens **which were of old**. This indicates that the highest heaven is in some sense ancient or old. Why would this be said if the first, second and third heavens were all created recently during the six days of the creation week? But if the creation of the third heaven pre-dated the creation of the first and second heaven, it would be appropriate to speak of the third heaven as being “of old” or ancient.

Ezekiel chapter 28 which tells us of Satan before his fall, there is nothing in the description which speaks of the earth. It all appears to be a heavenly scene, not an earthly scene. Thus the focus of Ezekiel 28 is upon the third heaven (prior to the creation of the universe) and the focus of Genesis one is upon the earth.

6. In the passages which do clearly mention the third heaven and the creation of angels (Colossians 1:16 and Nehemiah 9:6), nothing is said concerning the time frame of creation. The main point being stressed in these verses is that He is the Creator of all things.
7. A comparison of Exodus 20:11 with Nehemiah 9:6 would indicate that the expression “heaven(s)” does not necessarily include “the heaven of heavens.” A distinction seems to be made. If Nehemiah felt he needed to add the expression “heaven of heavens” to include the creation of angels, then it seems possible to say that the omission of this expression in Exodus 20:11 suggests that the creation of angels is not in view.
8. It would be nice and neat to be able to say that **everything** (including the “heaven of heaven” and its host) was created within the six-day creation week, but does the Bible actually say this? It may seem awkward to posit a creation of the third heaven prior to the creation of the universe. However, this view actually harmonizes more easily with Job 38:7 that says, “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” This passage in the ancient book of Job is referring to the time when God laid the foundation of the earth. The angels were already there as witnesses and they were rejoicing at God’s work of creation. A natural and normal reading of Job 38 seems to indicate that when God created the earth (Genesis 1:1 on the very first day of creation), the angels were already there witnessing this event. The text in Job 38 does not seem to imply that these angels were recently created just moments before. One would assume by just reading Job 38 that the angels were created PRIOR to the creation of the earth. Genesis 1:1 seems to put the creation of the earth at the very beginning of DAY ONE of creation. Note: Those who place the creation of angels within the six days are thus forced to say that they were created at the very beginning of the

creation week so that they could thus witness the laying of the foundation of the earth, which also took place early on the first day of creation. This understanding seems strained and forced.

9. Genesis 1:31 says that God looked at everything which He made (cf. Exodus 20:11)—namely, the entire created universe which He had so wondrously filled and formed during these six days—and He said, “VERY GOOD.” It does not say that He looked at Satan and said, “VERY GOOD.” Satan’s “VERY GOOD” had already been pronounced prior to his fall and recorded in Ezekiel 28:15 (“perfect in thy ways”). There is not really a problem with God saying, “VERY GOOD” even though Satan had already fallen. All would agree that a fallen Satan was present in the garden in Genesis three, but this fact did not make the universe any less “good” prior to the curse. It was not Satan’s sin that spoiled and ruined the earth and caused all of creation to be subject to vanity (Rom. 8:19-23). It was Adam’s sin which did this. The earth was not cursed because of Lucifer’s fall, but because of Adam’s fall. Before the earth was cursed, was it not a VERY GOOD paradise even though Satan was present?
10. Pastor Parsons has done a detailed study on Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 (Lucifer before and after his fall). This study is available to all who ask for it. From this study it can be seen that one of the key reasons God created the earth was to vindicate His character against the false charges of the devil (the accuser) and to demonstrate something very important to the angels, both good and bad. If one of the key reasons for creating the earth was to demonstrate certain things to angels, then it makes much more sense to say that the angels existed prior to the creation of the earth. This study is entitled “Angels” (\$1.50).

The Middletown Bible Church

349 East Street

Middletown, CT 06457

(860) 346-0907

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